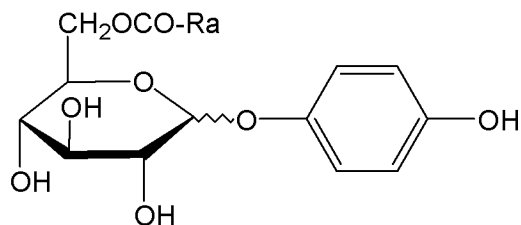


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently amended)** An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

Formula (1)



wherein Ra is selected from the group consisting of:

$\text{R}_1\text{-CH=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COOCH=CH}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COOH}$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

$\text{R}_1\text{-COO-R}_2$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group; and R_2 is an alkyl group or an aryl group; and

$\text{R}_1\text{-C(CH}_3\text{)}_3$, wherein R_1 is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group.

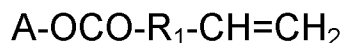
2.-10. **(Canceled)**

11. **(Currently amended):** A method of inhibiting composition that inhibits tyrosinase comprising, providing as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1, wherein tyrosinase is inhibited.

12. **(Canceled)**

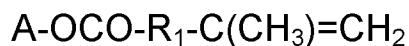
13. **(Currently amended):** A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (15) or (17):

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



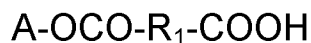
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



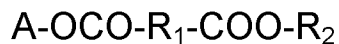
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36. **(Canceled)**

37. **(Currently amended)** The A composition comprising an arbutin ester compound according to Claim 1 and 11, ~~further comprising a suitable carrier.~~

38. **(New)** An external preparation for the skin comprising the composition according to claim 37.

39. **(New)** The arbutin ester compound of Claim 1, wherein -Ra is selected from the group consisting of:

-R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

-R₁-C(CH₃)=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

-R₁-COOCH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group; and

-R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group.

40. **(New)** The arbutin ester compound of Claim 1, wherein -Ra is selected from the group consisting of:

-R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond or an alkyl group having 1 to 16 carbon atoms;

-R₁-C(CH₃)=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond;

-R₁-COOCH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is an alkyl group having 1 to 16 carbon atoms; and

-R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond.

41. **(New)** The arbutin ester compound of Claim 1, wherein the compound is selected from the group consisting of 6-*O*-acryloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-methacryloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-vinyladipoyl arbutin, arbutin 6-*O*-adipoyl acid ester, 6-*O*-methyladipoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-decenoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-oleoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-pivaloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-benzoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-butanoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-lauroyl arbutin, 6-*O*-stearoyl arbutin, and 6-*O*-(10-undecylenoyl) arbutin.

42. **(New)** The arbutin ester compound of Claim 1, wherein the compound is 6-*O*-(10-undecylenoyl) arbutin.

43. **(New)** A composition comprising the arbutin ester compound of Claim 42 and a suitable carrier.

44. **(New)** An external preparation for the skin comprising the composition of claim 43.

45. **(New)** The method of Claim 11, wherein -Ra of the arbutin ester compounds is selected from the group consisting of:

-R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

-R₁-C(CH₃)=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

-R₁-COOCH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group; and

-R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group.

46. **(New)** The method of Claim 11, wherein -Ra of the arbutin ester compounds is selected from the group consisting of:

-R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond or an alkyl group having 1 to 16 carbon atoms;

-R₁-C(CH₃)=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond;

-R₁-COOCH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is an alkyl group having 1 to 16 carbon atoms; and

-R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond.

47. **(New)** A method of Claim 11, wherein the arbutin ester compounds are selected from the group consisting of 6-*O*-acryloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-methacryloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-vinyladipoyl arbutin, arbutin 6-*O*-adipoyl acid ester, 6-*O*-methyladipoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-decenoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-oleoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-pivaloyl arbutin, 6-*O*-benzoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-butanoyl arbutin, 6-*O*-lauroyl arbutin, 6-*O*-stearoyl arbutin, and 6-*O*-(10-undecylenoyl) arbutin.

48. **(New)** The method of Claim 11, wherein said at least one of the arbutin ester compounds is 6-*O*-(10-undecylenoyl) arbutin.